

WORKFORCE OBSERVATIONS FOR NORTHWEST WISCONSIN COUNTIES

MARCH 2003



State of Wisconsin
Department of Workforce Development

Unemployment in February less than last year

The unemployment rate in Northwest Wisconsin rose in February but remains lower than one year ago. The current unemployment rate of 8.6 percent, while higher than the 8.3 percent unemployed in January, is down from the 9.9 percent rate of February 2002.

The seasonally adjusted unemployment in the State of Wisconsin declined to 5.3 percent in February from 5.4 percent in January, while the national seasonally adjusted rate increased to 5.8 percent. Not adjusted the state rate rose from 6.3 to 6.4 percent.

While most of the 72 counties in the state reported a rise in unemployment rate in February, five had lower rates, including Bayfield and Douglas counties in Northwest Wisconsin. Tourism may have helped ease unemployment in February but with such a short season the reprieve will be temporary. Both counties typically record the highest unemployment rates of the year in either February or March, as do all of the counties in the northwest region.

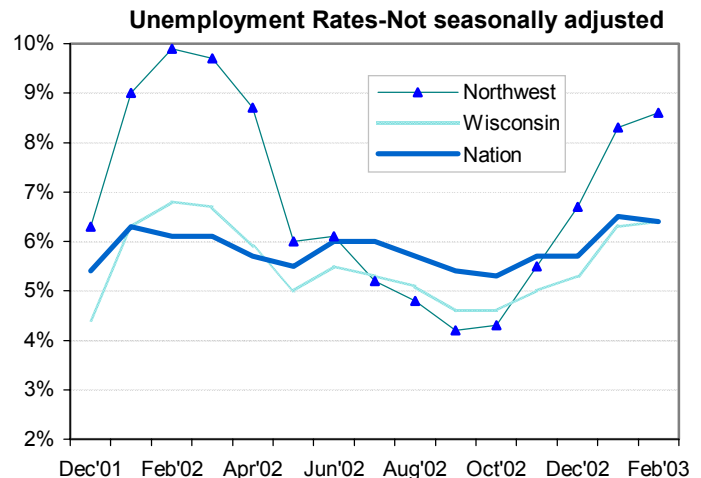
The number of unemployed in the region increased in February to 8,300 but that is nearly 1,000 less than in February 2002. The rise of only 300 unemployed from January follows several months in the fall of 2002 where increases were higher than normal.

The number of residents filing claims for unemployment compensation benefits is also less this February than one year ago. In mid-February, there were 5,020 claims filed for unemployment benefits compared with 5,430 claims twelve months earlier.

The majority of residents filing for benefits, nearly 80 percent, are laid off from area manufacturing and

construction employers. Another ten percent of the claims are from workers in tourism-related industries. Many of those currently laid off will be returning to work in the next few months.

In February, however, total employment in the region declined from 87,560 in January to 87,300. The counties with a higher share of manufacturing jobs, Price, Rusk, and Taylor, reported the greatest reductions in employment. Consequently, these counties also had greater increases in unemployment rates. The unemployment rate in Price County rose from 7.4 percent in January to 7.7 percent in February. In Rusk County, the rate increased from 9.1 to 11.2



	Dec'01	Jan'02	Feb'02	Dec'02	Jan'03	Feb'03
Northwest	6.3%	9.0%	9.9%	6.7%	8.3%	8.6%
Wisconsin	4.4%	6.3%	6.8%	5.3%	6.3%	6.4%
Nation	5.4%	6.3%	6.1%	5.7%	6.5%	6.4%

Civilian Labor Force Estimates for Northwest Wisconsin counties: Current month - February, 2003

	Ashland			Bayfield			Burnett			Douglas			Iron		
	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02
Civilian labor force	8,548	8,543	8,351	7,773	7,796	7,488	7,962	7,937	7,526	23,823	23,580	23,206	3,497	3,483	3,388
Employed	7,704	7,704	7,300	7,044	7,044	6,674	7,382	7,386	6,827	22,185	21,912	21,248	3,138	3,159	3,036
Unemployed	844	839	1,051	729	752	814	580	551	699	1,638	1,668	1,958	359	324	352
% unemployed	9.9	9.8	12.6	9.4	9.6	10.9	7.3	6.9	9.3	6.9	7.1	8.4	10.3	9.3	10.4
	Price			Rusk			Sawyer			Taylor			Washburn		
	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02
Civilian labor force	7,359	7,403	7,100	7,303	7,310	7,186	10,089	10,214	10,165	11,038	11,094	10,683	8,170	8,174	8,021
Employed	6,791	6,858	6,506	6,487	6,642	6,285	9,180	9,301	9,287	10,037	10,184	9,566	7,357	7,369	7,140
Unemployed	568	545	594	816	668	901	909	913	878	1,001	910	1,117	813	805	881
% unemployed	7.7	7.4	8.4	11.2	9.1	12.5	9.0	8.9	8.6	9.1	8.2	10.5	10.0	9.8	11.0

Industry Employment Estimates: Current month - February 2003

(Employment in thousands)	Ashland			Bayfield			Burnett			Douglas			Iron		
	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02
Total Nonfarm	8.7	8.7	8.5	3.8	3.7	3.6	4.9	4.9	4.6	18.0	17.8	17.5	2.3	2.3	2.3
Const/Min'g/Nat. Resources	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.2
Manufacturing	1.1	1.1	1.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.3	1.2	1.3	0.4	0.4	0.4
Trade	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.5	3.1	3.1	3.0	0.4	0.4	0.4
Transportation & Utilities	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	2.0	2.1	1.9	0.1	0.1	0.0
Financial Activities	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.1
Education & Health Services	1.9	1.9	1.8	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.6	1.7	1.7	1.9	0.3	0.3	0.3
Leisure & Hospitality	0.9	0.9	0.8	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.5	2.2	2.2	2.1	0.4	0.4	0.4
Info, Prof/Bus.Srv, Othr Srv.	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	3.2	3.2	2.9	0.1	0.1	0.1
Total Government	2.2	2.1	2.0	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.3	3.3	3.1	3.3	0.3	0.3	0.4

	Price			Rusk			Sawyer			Taylor			Washburn		
	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02	Feb '03	Jan '03	Feb '02
Total Nonfarm	6.6	6.6	6.4	5.8	5.9	5.7	6.4	6.5	6.7	6.4	6.5	8.5	5.7	5.8	5.7
Const/Min'g/Nat. Resources	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
Manufacturing	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.0	2.1	2.0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	2.7	1.0	1.0	1.0
Trade	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.6	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.1	1.2	1.3	0.8	0.9	0.8
Transportation & Utilities	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.2
Financial Activities	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
Education & Health Services	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.8
Leisure & Hospitality	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.9	0.9	0.7	0.9	0.9	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.5
Info, Prof/Bus.Srv, Othr Srv.	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.4	0.4	0.4
Total Government	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.9	1.9	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.1	1.4	1.4	1.5

Current month preliminary. Estimates based on March 2002 benchmark. Summing from unrounded numbers.

percent and in Taylor, the rate rose from 8.2 to 9.1 percent. Rusk County had the third highest rate in the state in February while all ten counties had a rate higher than the state unadjusted rate of 6.4 percent.

While tourism may have contributed to an increase

Assistance sought from multi - location employers

Employers with operations in multiple locations (worksites) in Wisconsin who do not report the number of workers at each location are requested to complete a Multiple Worksite Report (MWR), PLEASE. The MWR are sent to employers during the first quarter by the Bureau of Workforce Information and supplement the data that employers provide on the Unemployment Insurance Quarterly Contribution Report.

Similar to the unemployment report, the employment and wage data collected in this survey is confidential and used only for statistical and analytical studies, Unemployment Insurance Program purposes, and the Dislocated Worker Program. Employers benefit because data (like that in the above table) can be used to assist business planners with new sites location, economic forecasting, and wage analysis.

For more information, or assistance on the MWR, contact Deborah Holt at 608.266.5321.

in jobs in Bayfield County, an increase in government jobs boosted employment in other counties. The increase in government jobs was the result of workers being recalled to positions vacated during the holidays. Delayed payroll reporting by government agencies, especially local and state education, shifts the increase in jobs to February rather than in January when they actually occurred. Government employment increased by 400 jobs during the month, but this should be viewed with some caution since most state and local units are facing budget reductions.

Nearly every other industry sector in the region lost jobs in February. Those reductions brought the total number of jobs in the region down to 68,800 - about 700 fewer jobs than one year ago. The number of jobs in the goods producing sector is down nearly 2,000 while there are roughly 1,250 more service producing jobs (including nearly 1,000 more government jobs).

NOTE: Commuting patterns for workers have been released by Census. The web address is <http://www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/commuting.html> Or you can contact Beverly Gehrke (see below).

Look for the most current Labor Market Information at: WWW.DWD.STATE.WI.US/LMI

Direct questions and comments to: **Beverly Gehrke, Labor Market Analyst**

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